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DE RUEHIN #2642/01 2190839
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 070839Z AUG 06
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1449
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5521
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 6731

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 002642

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS, U.S.-TAIWAN
RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their coverage August 5-7 on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' sudden announcement Saturday night, just before Premier Su Tseng-chang was to leave on his planned trip to Chad, that Taiwan had severed ties with that country after learning that Chad would resume diplomatic relations with China; the Ministry of Transportation and Communications' decision on the controversial operation of the highway electronic toll collection system; the Cabinet's reshuffle of its economic chiefs; and the disclosure of President Chen Shui-bian's alleged "secret" bank account. The pro-status quo "China Times" ran a banner headline on page two August 7 that read "China, Chad Establish Ties; Cross-Straits Trade and Economic Policy Suddenly Frozen." The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, meanwhile, ran a banner headline on page two August 6 that said "Island Will Push for Its UN Bid Using Taiwan's Name." The pro-unification "United Daily News" reported on the results of its latest survey August 7, which showed that President Chen's approval rating has dropped to a new low of 15 percent, while Premier Su's approval rating also has dropped to 39 percent from 43 percent in March.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" editorial urged Premier Su to give up his "Su revisionist line" and stop pushing to open cross-Straits trade, as Chad's switching diplomatic relations to China showed that Beijing is trying its best to isolate Taiwan in the international community. A "United Daily News" analysis, however, called on Su to think from the opposite direction and to continue to push his "revisionist line." In terms of U.S.-Taiwan relations, an op-ed piece in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" said "there is a pressing need for better communication between the U.S. and Taiwan in a rapidly changing atmosphere." An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" called on Washington to grant Taiwan people visa-free entry for short tourist stays. End summary.

¶3. Cross-Straits Relations

A) "Will China Do Anything That Benefits Taiwan?"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] editorialized (8/7):

"... Since the beginning of this year, some factions in the DPP have proposed a 'confident opening,' and there was the so-called 'Su revisionist line' following President Chen's announcement that he would cede some of his powers. The stubbornly biased belief in opening [cross-Straits trade] not only helped quickly to weaken Taiwan economically, but is also tantamount to secretly helping China to contain Taiwan diplomatically. Just as Premier Su was

about to push for the opening [of cross-Strait trade] in the wake of the Taiwan Sustainable Economic Development Conference, China has gone to great lengths to isolate Taiwan in the international community. Chad may just be one of the many examples. The incident of Chad shows that it is better to quit the so-called 'confident opening' or 'Su revisionist line.'

B) "Chad Steps in; Su Revisionism Becomes 'Su Being Fixed'"

Journalist Sean Liu noted in an analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (8/7):

"... For many people, China's suppression of Taiwan's foreign relations this time made Su Tseng-chang a victim; on the other hand, it also unexpectedly offered him more room to maneuver with regard to cross-Strait relations. If Su, who has just been dealt a blow by China, can think from the reverse direction and continue to push for the 'Su revisionist line,' he will find himself standing on more solid ground to refute the doubts of the pro-independence activists. Su needs to calmly ponder how to strike a balance between his outrage for now and political needs in the long run, and discover his position in terms of cross-Strait relations."

14. U.S.-Taiwan Relations

A) "Change the Rules of US-Taiwan Ties"

Nate Bellocchi, a former chairman of AIT and now a special adviser to the Liberty Times Group, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (8/7):

"... The changes now being sought by Congress are reasonable and long overdue. There is a pressing need for better communication between the US and Taiwan in a rapidly changing atmosphere. Even China must be aware that better US-Taiwan communication would be a good thing for it, too. Beijing today may still want to absorb Taiwan, but it is clearly well aware that it has far bigger problems within China than with Taiwan. It is also aware that the US (and

Taiwan) do not want war over the issue any more than it does. It is time that the US, in its own interest, underlines the point that visits and meetings with senior Taiwanese officials in the US or Taiwan are in everyone's interest, including China's. It's in no one's interest to have misunderstandings and tension while dealing with such sensitive issues."

B) "Visa Waiver for ROC"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (8/6):

"Much attention has been paid in Taiwan's news media to the debate in the United States over proposed changes to the Immigration and Nationality Act that governs American immigration law. While the vast majority of Taiwanese now have little trouble obtaining visas to visit the United States, given the fact that the ROC on Taiwan has long ago joined the list of economically developed nations, many people here still fume at the prospect of having to line up at the American Institute in Taiwan just to get permission to visit friends and relatives in the United States.

"We sincerely hope that while politicians in the United States ponder the details of reforming the Immigration and Nationality Act, they will also remember that many economically developed countries in East Asia, including our own, should be placed on the 'Visa Waiver Program' list. ... The United States should therefore formally recognize the fact that Taiwan is now a developed country and grant our citizens visa-free entry for short tourist stays, just like our government already grants to U.S. citizens."

YOUNG